

Inspection of The Stephen Longfellow Academy

Global Avenue, Phoenix House, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS11 8PG

Inspection dates: 23–24 October 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel safe and respected at school. Staff care about pupils and understand their different needs. Pupils are well looked after and behave well. They say that once pupils new to the school are settled into everyday routines, their behaviour improves quickly. Bullying is uncommon. Adults are consistent in encouraging good behaviour. Pupils fully understand the systems that are in place to help them to concentrate in class. They say that these work well.

Teachers know how each individual pupil is doing both emotionally and in relation to their school work. Teachers plan to support pupils' mental health needs and to get the best out of them in class. Pupils access therapy and counselling to help them to make the most out of school. During their time at school, pupils become more confident. They develop their resilience and social skills. Most are well prepared for life after school. Some pupils need to further improve their attendance, however.

Pupils study a wide range of subjects. All teachers expect pupils to do well. By the end of Year 11, pupils sit a range of examinations. The careers guidance that they receive is excellent. The majority of pupils move on to college or a job when they leave. Pupils are proud to go to The Stephen Longfellow Academy.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders want the range of subjects that pupils study to be like those on offer at any mainstream school. Their main aim is to support pupils' social and mental health needs while also keeping educational standards high. For example, in primary classrooms, pupils study history, geography, music and Mandarin, among other subjects. In the secondary phase, pupils can choose from a wide range of academic and vocational options, such as history, food technology and building.

Secondary pupils are taught in one of two pathways. Most pupils are in 'tier one'. They study a range of subjects. Pupils' social and emotional needs are met in a range of ways, including through therapies, counselling and support from pastoral staff. Pupils in 'tier two' attend school for fewer lessons. They receive intensive support to help them to overcome problems and get the most out of school. This system works well. Many pupils return to 'tier one' quickly.

Teachers make sure that pupils build upon their knowledge step by step. Teachers look closely at what pupils can already do. They then make sure that they plan to help individual pupils to build on this. The curriculum is particularly strong in mathematics.

In some subjects, teachers plug any gaps in pupils' knowledge that are caused by periods of absence. This is not done consistently well across all subjects. Sometimes teachers do not do enough to fill any gaps in knowledge when pupils move between 'tier two' and 'tier one'. Occasionally, teachers do not check what pupils know and

can do precisely enough to help them learn even more. Nonetheless, leaders have made sure that pupils learn and achieve well in both the primary and secondary classrooms.

Teachers know how to help pupils with social and emotional needs. They also understand their subjects well and how to present new information effectively. Teachers use precise and technical vocabulary. They expect pupils to rise to the challenge of using this vocabulary themselves and they do. Leaders give high priority to reading. Teachers help weaker readers to develop their phonics. Extra classes to stretch pupils use interesting texts as a starting point for discussion.

Staff are consistent when it comes to making sure that pupils behave well. Pupils know the school's behaviour policy inside-out. Pupils are calm in lessons and when moving around school. Leaders' systems to keep a check on behaviour are impressive. They use the findings to refine how things work. Reward systems, privilege club and the use of the planners help pupils to focus on their behaviour. Attendance is improving, although too many pupils are absent too often.

There are a wide range of activities on offer during the school day. These include football, karate, gym, chess club and the popular breakfast tutorial. Leaders map out opportunities for pupils' personal development through assemblies, visiting speakers and other special events.

Leaders want the very best for pupils and have established an effective alternative provision in a short period of time. Staff are fully on board. Leaders and staff are working together well to make this school even better for the benefit of its pupils and their families.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff work closely with parents and carers to provide excellent support for vulnerable pupils. Leaders' detailed records show that concerns about pupils and referrals to other agencies are followed up promptly. All staff take responsibility for keeping pupils safe. All the required checks are made before adults are allowed to work with pupils.

Staff are aware of the additional vulnerabilities of some pupils. Staff are well trained to spot signs of anxiety. The work of health professionals is also of high quality in helping to keep pupils safe. They support pupils with mental health issues and give advice about the risks of drugs and alcohol, for example. The high-quality pastoral support on offer helps to make sure that pupils feel safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers ensure that pupils' knowledge builds progressively in some subjects but not all. Some teachers use assessment to pinpoint exactly what pupils know and what they need to learn next. Leaders need to make sure that this excellent practice is adopted more widely across the school so that pupils learn as well as they can in all subjects.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. They miss out on too much of their education and develop gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders need to ensure that more pupils attend well and that those who do miss school are supported effectively to catch up on any work that is missed. This includes those pupils who move from 'tier two' to 'tier one'.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143761
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10127596
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Terry Elliott
Principal	Ben Mallinson
Website	www.stephenlongfellow.leeds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Stephen Longfellow Academy is an alternative provision free school for pupils aged between 5 and 16. It is part of the GORSE Academies Trust.
- The school currently has 163 pupils. The vast majority were dual registered at the time of the inspection. This means that they are on the roll of two schools: the commissioning school and The Stephen Longfellow Academy. Many pupils move exclusively onto the roll of The Stephen Longfellow Academy during their time at the school. This move to single registration often occurs during key stage 4. Leaders informed inspectors that this is in line with the original free school application to the Department for Education. Inspectors were not convinced by the school's explanation of why moving to single registration is in the best interests of each pupil.
- The school works with Leeds College of Building as part of the curriculum offer for pupils.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the principal and members of the senior leadership team. We spoke

to the chief executive officer, trustees and members of the local governing body.

- We met with the designated safeguarding lead and spoke to staff with responsibility for safeguarding. We talked to staff who deal with pupil attendance and those who support pupils' mental and physical health. We looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included child protection policies and procedures, absence data, documentation about the use of restrictive physical intervention and exclusions data.
- We spoke with pupils during the course of the inspection and asked them about aspects of behaviour and safety. We contacted the alternative provider used by the school and checked safeguarding arrangements between the provider and the school. We spoke to colleagues from schools that commission places at The Stephen Longfellow Academy. This included some schools from the GORSE Academies Trust, as well as other schools.
- We held meetings with those responsible for pupils' personal development. We met with the special educational needs coordinator.
- We looked at English (including reading), mathematics, history and food technology in detail. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We talked to pupils about what they knew and remembered in these subjects. We looked at pupils' work and discussed this with some of them.

Inspection team

Michael Wardle, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Phil Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lee Elliott	Her Majesty's Inspector

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